

*to Evangelical Religion**

But the great number who chose to write on subjects that come within the relations of the Christian system, as on the various views of morals, the distinctions and judgments of human character, and the theory of happiness, with almost unavoidable references sometimes to our connexion with Deity, to death, and to a future state, ought to have written every page under the recollection, that these subjects are not left free for careless or arbitrary sentiment since the time that "God has spoken to us by his Son;" and that the finest composition would be only so much eloquent impiety, if essentially discordant with the dictates of the New Testament. Had this been an habitual and influential recollection with the admired writers of the Christian world, an ingenuous mind might have been conversant alternately with their works and those of evangelists and apostles, without being confounded in the conflict of antipathy between the inspirations of genius and the inspirations of heaven.

I confine my view chiefly to the elegant literature of our own country. And there is a presumption in its favour, independently of actual comparison, that it is much less exceptionable than the belles lettres of the other countries of modern Europe; for this plain reason, that the extended prevalence of the happy light of the Reformation through almost the whole period of the production of our works of genius and taste, must necessarily, by presenting the religion of Christ in an aspect more true to its genuine dignity, have compelled from the intellectual men who did not deny its truth, and could not be entirely ignorant of its most essential properties, a kind and degree of respect which would not be felt by the same order of men in popish countries, whose

did he think that nothing more remained possible to be done in service to Christianity, that his accomplished mind was left at leisure for hymns to the Hindoo gods? Was not this even a violation of the neutrality, and an offence, not only against the gospel, but against theism itself? I know what may be said about personification, license of poetry, and so on; but should not a worshipper of God hold himself under a solemn obligation to abjure all tolerance of even poetical figures that can seriously seem, in any way whatever, to recognize the pagan divinities—or abominations, as the prophets of Jehovah would have called them? What would Elijah have said to such an employment of talents in his time? It would have availed little to have told him that these divinities were only personifications (with their appropriate representative idols) of objects in nature, of elements, or of abstractions. He would have sternly replied, And was not Baal, whose prophets I destroyed, the same?